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Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
PA-02 ICA-20 SP-02 /045 R

DRAFTED BY STF:JDCONLEY:LAR
APPROVED BY SFT:WLSWING
S/S-O :TGMARTIN
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O 170310Z MAY 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA IMMEDIATE
INFO AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS STATE 125188

E.O. 11652:

TAGS:MAPS, PINS, CG

SUBJECT: SHABA INCURSIONS: U.S. PRESS REACTION

1. FOLLOWING EDITORIAL APPEARED IN WASHINGTON POST MAY 16 UNDER HEADING 'ZAIRE AGAIN."

2. BEGIN QUOTE: FOR THE SECOND SUCCESSIVE SPRING, IT APPEARS CUBAN-ASSISTED KATANGESE SOLDIERS HAVE CROSSED FROM ANGOLA INTO A TRADITIONAL TRIBAL AREA (SHABA) IN SOUTHERN ZAIRE, POSING AGAIN THE THREAT OF GRABBING ZAIRE'S COPPER BELT AND SETTING UP A SEPARATE STATE. THE FIRST SKETCHY REPORTS SUGGEST THAT THIS YEAR THE INVADERS ARE BETTER PREPARED AND THAT THEY ARE MAKING A GOOD DEAL MORE INITIAL PROGRESS AGAINST THE FORCES OF PRESIDENT MOBUTO SESE SEKO.

IT WAS WIDELY NOTED LAST YEAR THAT ANGOLA, IN SPONSORING THE KATANGESE, WAS "REPAYING" ZAIRE FOR ZAIREAN SUPPORT
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OF THE ANGOLAN FACTIONS THAT THE NETO GOVERNMENT DEFEATED IN TAKING POWER IN 1975. GENERAL AWARENESS OF THAT AFRICAN BACKGROUND COST ZAIRE SYMPATHY, IF NOT SUPPORT, FOR ITS TRAVAILS. YET ANGOLA DID NOT THEREBY ACQUIRE A RIGHT TO SPONSOR ANNUAL INVASIONS. IT HAS NO SUCH RIG;T. IT HAS, RATHER, AN OBLIGATION TO ACCEPT INTERNATIONAL STAN-DARDS OF RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF OTHER STATES.

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IN ITS STRAITENED CIRCUMSTANCES LAST YEAR, THE MOBUTU GOVERNMENT CAST ABOUT FOR FOREIGN SUPPORT, GETTING LITTLE FROM THE UNITED STATES. MUCH OF AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION FOUND ZAIRE AND ITS APPEAL UNWORTHY ON VARIOUS GROUNDS, AND THE THEN-NEW CARTER ADMINISTRATION LARGELY STEPPED ASIDE, LEAVING IT -- IN SOMETHING OF A CLIFFHANGER -- FOR ZAIRE'S OTHER FOREIGN FRIENDS TO FILL THE BREECH. ZAIRE IS SCARCELY LESS STRAITENED THIS YEAR, AND INTERNAL CONDITIONS HAVE NOT SUBSTANTIALLY CHANGED. BUT THERE IS A GREATER AWARENESS OF THE CUBAN-SOVIET PRESENCE IN AFRICA. THE ATTENTION THAT MR. CARTER HIMSELF NOW FOCUSES UPON IT GIVES A COUNTRY LIKE ZAIRE, WHICH SEEMS TO HAVE FALLEN VICTIM A SECOND TIME TO A COMMUNIST-SUPPORTED ATTACK, THAT MUCH MORE OF A CLAIM UPON AMERICAN AID.

UNTIL THE DIMENSIONS OF THE LATEST SHABA CRISIS ARE KNOWN, IT IS UNNECESSARY TO CONSIDER WHAT THE SPECIFICS OF AN AMERICAN RESPONSE MIGHT BE. KINSHASA'S FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE IS, PLAINLY, ITSELF. ZAIRE'S OTHER FOREIGN FRIENDS AND THE AFRICAN COMMUNITY ALL HAVE A STAKE IN UPHOLDING THE PRINCIPLE OF TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND IN PUTTING A HALT TO AGGRESSION AND TRIBAL IRREDENTISM. JUST AS THE ADMINISTRATION SEEMS MORE PRIMED TO COUNTER ANOTHER COMMUNIST-BACKED ADVANCE IN AFRICA, HOWEVER, SO THE PUBLIC WOULD ALSO PROBABLY BE READIER TO GO ALONG.
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THAT IS THE DIFFERENCE A YEAR'S AFRICAN EXPERIENCE HAS MADE. END QUOTE. VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NEWS MEDIA COMMENTS, INVASIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE125188
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: JDCONLEY:LAR
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780207-0309
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780548/aaaaboxe.tel
Line Count: 96
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 45e7b39b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN AF
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2661505
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SHABA INCURSIONS: U.S. PRESS REACTION
TAGS: MOPS, PINS, CG, US
To: KINSHASA
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/45e7b39b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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